

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Embodiments of the present invention provide for a method, system and article of manufacture for operating vending machines. In general, a plurality of vending machines are nodes of a network. Each node is configured to send, receive and process signals carrying inventory, pricing, reservation and/or refund information. In particular, a first signal is sent to one or more nodes requesting inventory/price information from other nodes. Those nodes carrying the product may reply with a second signal. In this manner, the location of vending machines carrying one or more items specified by a customer may be determined. In another embodiment, vending machine items may be reserved from a remote location. In still another embodiment, vending machines may be configured to provide refunds under controlled conditions. A consumer may request a refund in cases where the consumer was improperly charged for goods or services that were not provided.

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